By Nick Phillips

The UNCP men’s basketball team notched one of its biggest wins in recent history on Jan. 5, when they traveled to USC Aiken and knocked off the No. 13 team in the nation by a score of 81-66.

The win was the Braves’ first against USC Aiken in their last seven tries, and their first win in Aiken since February 2002. UNCP was led by the sophomore trio of K.J. Cooper, Shahmel Brackett and George Blakeney, as the three combined for 43 of the Braves’ 78 total points.

Brackett tallied a team-high 15 points in the UNCP win. Lamar Cross combined to shoot 11-of-17 from the floor and 7-of-10 from the three-point line to combine for 36 of the Braves’ 81 total points. Heath also dished out four assists and a block in the game.

The two teams also finished with an impressive six-for-seven from the free throw line, finishing the game shooting 80 percent from the stripe.

UNCP’s win over No. 13 USC Aiken on Jan. 5.

Brackett leads Braves in win over Lander

By Nick Phillips

On a night where the English E. Jones Center had 1,745 fans support the host team, the UNCP Braves put on a show on Jan. 12.

The Braves beat Peach Belt Conference foe Lander Bearcats for the second time this season, by a score of 81-66.

The Braves took the lead at the 9:23 mark of the second half and didn’t look back. UNCP did not give in, however, as the Braves fought back to take the lead 61-60 with just over 11 minutes to go.

USC Aiken held a five-point, 32-27 lead at halftime before the Braves retook the lead at the 9:23 mark of the second half and didn’t look back.

The win was the first time all season that UNCP did not allow its opponent to score 100 points. UNCP limited USC Aiken to 38 total points and only allowed the Braves to score in double digits led by sophomore guard Shamel Brackett, who ended the game with 15 points and three steals. Brackett also shot an impressive six-for-seven from the free throw line.

Despite Brackett’s impressive performance, junior Marcus Heath and seniors Chris Hargrove and Lamar Cross combined to shoot 11-of-17 from the floor and 7-of-10 from the three-point line to combine for 36 of the Braves’ 81 total points. Heath also dished out four assists and a block in the game.

UNCP’s K.J. Cooper attempts a layup against Lander. Cooper finished with a Braves’ team-high 17 points in UNCP’s win over No. 13 USC Aiken on Jan. 5.

Brackett had 12 points, three assists and two rebounds in the contest. Junior Cody Hughes scored 14 points while also adding six rebounds, and senior Chris Hargrove led the Braves with seven rebounds.

UNCP’s win over No. 13 USC Aiken on Jan. 5.

UNCP’s win over No. 13 USC Aiken on Jan. 5.

UNCP controlled the pace of the game with a balanced scoring attack that allowed for four Braves to score in double digits led by sophomore guard Shamel Brackett, who ended the game with 15 points and three steals. Brackett also shot an impressive six-for-seven from the free throw line.

Despite Brackett’s impressive performance, junior Marcus Heath and seniors Chris Hargrove and Lamar Cross combined to shoot 11-of-17 from the floor and 7-of-10 from the three-point line to combine for 36 of the Braves’ 81 total points. Heath also dished out four assists and a block in the game.

UNCP’s win over No. 13 USC Aiken on Jan. 5.

The two teams also finished with an identical eight made three-point shots, while UNCP didn’t leave much at the free throw line, finishing the game shooting 80 percent from the stripe.

UNCP senior Chris Hargrove finished with a game-high 24 points while adding four rebounds, followed by a trio of sophomores.

Guard Shamel Brackett tallied 15 points and seven rebounds, followed by George Blakeney’s 12 points, three assists, two blocks and a steal, while K.J. Cooper added nine points to go along with a game-high 13 rebounds in the game.

The game’s opening half went back and forth until Francis Marion grabbed a 10-point lead in the final two minutes before taking an eight point lead into halftime.

UNCP did not give in, however, as the Braves fought back to take the lead 61-60 with just over 11 minutes to go.

Then the two teams went back and forth for the remainder of the game, with the Braves pulling to 81-79 before Francis Marion closed the game out in the contest’s final minutes.

UNCP’s win over No. 13 USC Aiken on Jan. 5.

The UNCP men’s basketball squad opened 2011 with a Peach Belt Conference win over the No. 13 team in the country, USC Aiken.

The win was the Braves’ first against USC Aiken in their last seven tries, and their first win in Aiken since February 2002. UNCP was led by the sophomore trio of K.J. Cooper, Shahmel Brackett and George Blakeney, as the three combined for 43 of the Braves’ 78 total points.

Brackett tallied a team-high 15 points in the UNCP win. Lamar Cross combined to shoot 11-of-17 from the floor and 7-of-10 from the three-point line to combine for 36 of the Braves’ 81 total points. Heath also dished out four assists and a block in the game.

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